

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, June 28, 1906

Beinn Bhreagh, Victoria County, Cape Breton, N.S. Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell 1331 Connecticut Avenue, Washington, D. C. June 28, 1906. Dear Mabel:—

We haven't yet got into working order in respect to mail. I have just discovered that my letter to you of Sunday Night was not mailed until Tuesday Morning, because McDermid had not discovered that there was a mail bag in the cloak room when he went in with the mail on Monday morning. I am specially sorry for this because you must have received a letter from Miss Georg e i na McCurdy concerning our arrival here before you heard from me, and you must have been thinking that I have had forgotten you.

The again I dictated a note to you about the Wright Brothers flying machine on Tuesday afternoon at the Laboratory. It was typewritten yesterday, Wednesday, and sent up to me here at the Point but not delivered to me until now Thursday. So it will not be mailed until to-morrow Friday, and when you will get it the Lord only knows. Certainly we must make better arrangements for my mail. It is not right that a letter written Tuesday should not be mailed until Friday especially when we consider the great length of time required for letters to get from Baddeck to Washington. Not less than three days, and if Sunday intervenes it may even be as much as five days en route making a total of eight days to reach you.

I have just had a conference with Mr. McDermid and Mr. Cox to try to remedy this. Letters dictated one day should be completed 2 and signed the same night if we have to stay up all night to do it because the mail leaves Baddeck only once a day and that in the early morning.

You will be glad to know that I am almost allright again: My cough is disappearing and I have less trouble with my unfortunate knees. We have unfortunately had very poor

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weather since I arrived so that I have had little chance of being out in the open air. I have walked home from the Laboratory every day excepting yesterday, and when I had to drive home in a thunder storm.

Elsie and children are all well and happy. Roses begin to bloom in their cheeks. t T he other day while I was taking afternoon tea with Elsie at the Lodge, Melville in a spirit of mischief pushed over a chair on which Gertrude was standing, and Gertrude fell to the floor striking her head on another chair, but saving herself by putting out her hands. The yell that took place however showed that she was not much hurt; but the effect upon Melville was something extraordinary. He is a kind hearted little fellow and rushed off to the kitchen and returned with a piece of cookie as a peace offering for Gertrude. He was evidently distressed and came back and gave her the cookie and put his arms around her and told her he was so sorry and soon there were smiles and sunshine again.

I was specially pleased to see this because it was all done of his own volition without any prompting from others. Then 3 again Melville slapped his mother and then came running to play with me. I said nothing excepting that I could not play with a little boy who slapped his Mamma. He then slapped me and went off to sulk on a chair. I left him alone and took no notice of him and when I was going away I kissed Gertrude good-bye and went off without paying any attention to him, but when I reached the door I found Melville at my heels holding on to my coat, and when I looked down he said, "I am sorry", and held up his little face to be kissed. He then went and kissed his mother too. There had evidently been a struggle going on in his mind about right and wrong, and he had come to the right conclusion all by himself.

These are straws ; but they show the way the wind blows in the formation of his character.

Douglas and Mr. Baldwin took tea with Elsie at the Lodge the other day, and Miss Ramsburg sang for them. Douglas is now very anxious for me to invite Miss Ramsburg up here to have some music. (So it is evident you are a wise little woman!)

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I have been reading up old numbers of the Scientific American and came across an item concerning the drying of Photographic negatives in which it was stated that if you dip your wet developed plate into alcohol and leave it there for three minutes you will have a perfectly dry plate in five minutes. It occurred to me that this will be a great thing for Laboratory records and so I asked Douglas McCurdy to make some experiments with celluloid films. The result has been satisfactory so far as the drying is concerned, but the films are wrinkled, showing that the alcohol has acted on the gelatin backing of the film, or upon the celluloid itself. These films however were merely immersed in alcohol for at least five minutes and it seems to me that this long exposure is surely unnecessary. We have just taken one of the paper prints and dipped it for a moment in alcohol. It is now quite dry enough to be pasted in a book although only about five minutes have elapsed.

Douglas will try further experiments tomorrow placing negatives in alcohol for just a moment and for 1, 2, 3, 4, etc. seconds, noting the result upon the drying, and upon the wrinkling. It will be a great thing if we can secure photographs of experiments the same day the experiments are made, so that the prints may be placed in the notebook in conjunction with a description of the experiment. We have not hitherto been able to secure this; so that I have been obliged to keep my records of the experiments, and the photographs illustrating them, in separate books. Sometimes a whole week elapses before I can get a paper print of an experiment. The alcohol process looks promising.

Your loving husband Alec.